



## The impact of Football Events in Malta

What impact do Football Training Events leave on Malta's profile?

**Name of Student:** Liam Falzon  
**Course:** Higher National Diploma in Events  
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**Tutor:** Mr Daniel Demicoli

## **1. Declaration of Authenticity**



**Name & Surname:** Liam Falzon

**Programme:** HND in Events

**Title of Research:**

The impact of Football Events in Malta.

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### **Declaration:**

I hereby declare that this research study is based on the outcome of self-made research. I, as the authentic author, declare that this research study is my own composition, and has not been previously produced for any other qualification.

The research study was conducted under the supervision of Mr Daniel Joseph Demicoli

25/06/2021

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Date

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Signature

## 2. Abstract

This study identifies the impacts that football training camp events leave on the Maltese Islands. The reasoning behind this is because nowadays, Malta is still sometimes considered as a sun and sea country but in reality, it has much more to offer to the tourists which come to Malta especially in the sports tourism sector. Over the past 5 years several associations have been investing in these football training camps. Eventually Malta as a country has gained a lot of credibility and additional economical and influential benefits through these events. The economic benefits and quantitative statistics were mainly discovered through secondary research. On the other hand, the influential and qualitative information is identified through primary data, where two interviews were conducted with the Malta Tourism Authority and the MFA “SportsPlus Limited”. These are the main associations, with the addition of the Malta Football Association who organise these events. Ultimately, the results showed us what a great additional offer in Malta’s touristic experience these training camps are, the marketing aspects of these training camps, the level with which Malta is compared to other countries, the success of past training camps and why do these three associations need to work together in order for these events to succeed. Furthermore, interviews also shed the light on the lack of infrastructure in Malta. Finally, this research shows us the great potential that these football training camps have on the Maltese islands and it encourages these associations and more, to keep on investing in these events.

**Keywords:** Training Camps, Events, Influential, Impacts, Infrastructure, Improvement, Tourism, Experience

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Mr Helmut Amhof

Mr Lionel Gerada

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Declaration of Authenticity</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Background	7
<b>5. Literature Review</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1 Why Malta?	8
5.2 Experience	8
5.3 Venues and Facilities	9
5.4 Past Football Events	11
5.5 Impacts	13
<b>6. Research Methodology</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1 Introduction	14
6.2 The Methodology Chosen	14
Qualitative Research	14
Interview	15
Why this Methodology?	15
6.3 How was the Research Conducted?	16
6.4 Limitations	16
<b>7. Results and Analysis</b>	<b>18</b>
7.1 Interview 1	18
Background	18
Why Malta?	18
Attraction	18
Enhancement of the Touristic Experience	19
Previous Training Camp Events and their Impacts?	19
MTA, MFA and MFA “SportsPLus Limited”	20

<b>7.2 Interview 2</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Why Malta?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Enhancing the Experience</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Previous Training Camps and their Impacts</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>MTA, MFA and MFA “SportsPLus Limited”</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Future Plans</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>8. Discussion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>9. Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>10. Reference List</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>11. Appendix</b>	<b>31</b>

## **4. Introduction**

### **4.1 Background**

We all know how popular sports events in Malta are, especially football events. The football events that mostly effect the hospitality and tourism sector in Malta are the training camp events. A training camp event is when international football teams show up on the Maltese islands for numerous reasons which include, training football for a period of time in a warmer climate since Malta has a hot climate all year round, playing friendly matches against our local teams or also competing in tournaments which are formulated by organisations in Malta. The amount of time they spend may vary depending on their purpose. The main bodies that organise these football events are the Malta Football Association (MFA), MFA “SportsPlus Limited” and the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA).

These organisations work hand in hand since this concerns both football as a sport and the hospitality and tourism industry. Dr Chetcuti, who is the General Secretary of the MFA said that it is essential that the MFA receives full support from the Government and the MTA for the success of these football events (Chetcuti, 2019). Furthermore, they make an influential impact on the country’s profile. The term influential impact stands for the effect that these football events leave on the general public which include both local and international tourists. Numerous aspects need to be considered in the planning of these events like for instance the resources and facilities needed, the venues where these football events are going to be hosted, accommodations, sponsorships and the purpose of these events. The organisers of these events are mainly targeting both a national and an international audience who love this sport, as so to come watch or participate.

## **5. Literature Review**

### **5.1 Why Malta?**

Various training camp events are hosted in Malta all year round. When it comes to hosting these events, Malta is always in competition with other numerous countries. Malta provides an international team with an exceptional start and preparation to their season by playing in a warmer climate. The Maltese islands also offer various training pitches which are classified as venues for these training camps and a lot is invested in high class football facilities. Moreover, one can find a wide selection of accommodations which are suitable for every budget required. Finally, Malta is a relatively safe and crime-free environment. The author will furthermore explain in detail the majority of international teams participating in these events which mainly come from European countries. (Visit Malta, 2010).

### **5.2 Experience**

It is crucial to enhance and make it an unforgettable experience for these participants and tourists who come to Malta. The experience depends on various aspects. The sports experience mainly begins from a particular interaction among individuals and places where they can be assembled as artificial or natural turf. Also, if the event is going to take place indoor or outdoor and what the activities organised are, which in this case is the training camp event itself (Weed and Bull 2009). Other determinant aspects which contribute to tourism football experiences are the physical facilities of the island (Greenweel, Fink, and Pastore 2002), the quality of infrastructure which can include accommodations for the tourists or participants (Harrison-Hill and Chalip 2005) and also the environmental aspect (Kaplanidou and Vogt 2010). Eventually, the physical condition of the location will reflect and affect the destination's image and brand. This research of the experience of tourists will allow us to better understand the management of sports experiences and tourism in Malta. It is essential that sports organisers in Malta highlight managerial aspects of sports facilities as so to design and set an unforgettable experience for tourists. This is since primarily for Malta to attract more tourists and international teams, it needs to ensure that the sports facilities meet the criteria for professional sports and this criterion may include for instance, the capacity, the dimensions of the field or also security issues. This will



eventually make them capable of hosting major sporting events in particular training camp events.

### 5.3 Venues and Facilities

When planning these types of events one of the first things that comes to mind is the location you are going to use. Numerous venues are offered across the Maltese island. These include the “Cottonera Sports Complex”. This is situated in “Cospicua” (Bormla), which is the main sports complex in the south of Malta. This establishment has a complex design which makes it unique and innovative. In fact, it has the largest indoor facilities in our country. One of the main facilities in this complex is the ‘Main Hall’, which has a rubber surface. This can host up to 1,200 people. Furthermore, it has a multipurpose hall which can accommodate up to 300 spectators. This complex is also perfect for meetings, since it has a number of meeting areas which are often used for sports organisational meetings or annual general meetings. (Cottonera Sports Complex, 2015).

Figure 1: “Cottonera Sports Complex”



Another huge venue which is certainly the mainstream complex of Malta's football is the "Ta' Qali Sports Complex". This is the home to Malta's National football stadium. This National Complex is equipped with all the latest amenities. Some include individual seating in the stadium, floodlights, digital scoreboards, a public address system, a media centre, a Gymnasium, a spacious Gym equipped with the latest equipment and machinery, a physiotherapy clinic, a Technical Centre, dressing rooms, massage rooms, a sauna and a heated indoor swimming pool. Next to it there is another stadium which is known as the "Centenary Stadium", which is equipped with artificial turf and a few training grounds with natural turf. All of these facilities and training grounds are regularly used by the Maltese National team and also by foreign teams which their purpose is to come for these training camps (MFA,2015).



Figure 2: "Ta' Qali Sports Complex", Malta National Stadium

When these events are hosted in Malta it is something huge for the island since it attracts both national and international people to come and watch or participate. So eventually, they need to be hosted in the most equipped and professional venues. That is why they are mainly hosted in these two sports complexes. In addition, there are other venues where these events are hosted which include the "Marsa Sports Complex", the "Gozo Sports Complex", which is the home to the "Gozo National Stadium", the "Luxol Stadium" in Pembroke, the "Melita Stadium" in Pembroke, the "Hibernians Stadium" in Paola, the "Victor Tedesco Stadium" in Hamrun etc... The football grounds in such localities, which in the past were owned and used by British

Services like Marsa, Luqa, Pembroke and so on, were eventually transformed into sports complexes for the benefit of sports especially football in Malta.

The MFA, which is the main company when it comes to Malta's sporting facilities, has invested a lot throughout the years and it has gained substantial credibility. The MFA were mainly motivated by other countries. They needed to invest a lot in sports facilities as so to make it extremely attractive and feasible for other international teams. One of their investments was the "Millenium Stand". This was built in 2003 and is one of the latest and commercially intense investments of the MFA. Apart from the spectators' seating facilities, the stand is equipped with six Executive Boxes. In addition, it offers a Catering Service which manages to host up to 20 people. It also has a secluded balcony which is capable of seating up to 160 delegates with a neighbouring 'Hall'. This is ideal for hosting conferences or receptions for corporate clients. The stand can eventually host numerous indoor sports, conferences and exhibitions, a football museum for tourists to come and visit, a sports products retail store, a bar and also a cafeteria. All of these investments have helped in attracting more the audience which is crazy about this sport since they see it as being highly professional and fully equipped with all the necessary facilities in this sector (MFA,2015).

## **5.4 Past Football Events**

In January 29, 2020 the MFA (Malta football association) "SportsPlus Limited" hosted a number of clubs and international teams. The tournament was supported by the Malta Tourism Authority and it ended up being one of the busiest periods for Malta FA's facilities in Ta' Qali, where there were three teams from the Czech Republic and a team from Slovakia taking part in this competition. "FK Mlada", a team from Czech Republic, ended up winning the tournament. The presentation of trophies was held at the 'Dolmen hotel' in the presence of 'Julia Farrugia' who was previously the Minister of Tourism. Apart from this tournament, Malta was also hosting two teams; 'FC Ausburg' which is a team from Germany and a Belgian team 'Cercle Brugge', where they played two friendly matches against one of our local teams Hibernians (MFA,2020). Additionally, during this month Malta was also hosting the women's national teams of Switzerland and Turkey, where Malta's women national team played a friendly match against both teams. (MFA,2020)

So, during this month Malta was hosting 15 teams in these training camps, which is a big number considering it's a small island. During a meeting held prior these training camps a Chief Marketing Officer of the Malta Tourism Authority said, "We are pleased that more and more football teams are choosing to host their training camps in Malta. We started this co-operation with Helmut Amhof four years ago and we as MTA remain fully committed to this project, one that benefits not only sports and several stakeholders in the tourism industry but also promotes Malta as a tourist destination." (Micallef, 2019). It is so true that 'Manchester United' was interested in planning a training camp in Malta in September 2020 but unfortunately this was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic (MFA,2020).



Figure 3: The Presentation of Trophies in the presence of Julia Farrugia  
at the 'Dolmen Hotel'

## 5.5 Impacts

These football training camp events have a significant impact on Malta's profile. Firstly, they bring social inclusion because it connects people together to come and see these training camps happening. Secondly, it improves diversity since these are international teams. Thirdly, these training camps can be used to break down barriers between Malta and other countries. So eventually, intercultural skills will be improved. As the researcher has shown, these events attract a substantial number of tourists, thus, more tourists in our country, more tourists would be in need of our goods and services, for instance accommodation, restaurants and shopping and more local people will be interacting with tourists. Moreover, by means of these events, Malta will raise its status around the world and while these tourists are here, they can take the opportunity to go sightseeing around the picturesque islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino. Therefore, it will make their stay a memorable one (Thibodeau, 2020).

However, in a study carried out in Shanghai and China about major sporting events, it showed that the residents responded to both positive and negative social impacts. These impacts are surely applicable for Malta. The study outlined four positive impacts and two negative impacts on Shanghai and China. The positive impacts were that these major sporting events bring international exchange and co-operation. They give the motivation to improve infrastructure development in a location. This has been clearly shown in Malta's improvement in its facilities and infrastructures. Nonetheless, they also outlined that it boosts economic and tourism development. On the contrary, the residents said that it may bring environmental pollution due to rapid infrastructure developments, causing security problems which may lead to inconveniences. However overall, the people in Shanghai have a positive impression on the organisation of these major sporting events (Liu, 2014, p.87).

All in all, Malta has gained huge benefits from these football training camp events. In fact, they have contributed an estimated €5 million to the economy. There was a total of 30,000 bed nights generated by these football activities. Additionally, Malta was raised as a tourist destination. This has also increased the level of promotion and exposure for our island since several media representatives and television crews have visited Malta to cover these training camps (MFA,2020).

## **6. Research Methodology**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, it will be discussed what research methods were used to gather the necessary data for this study and why. In addition, it will be revealed which participants participated in this research, what the research consisted of, how was it conducted and finally, what limitations there were throughout this study. Eventually, the researcher came to a conclusion of answering this question, “What impact do Football Training Events leave on Malta's profile?”.

### **6.2 The Methodology Chosen**

A research methodology involves a set of distinct and specific techniques which are adopted during the researching phase of a study, in order to gather, assemble and eventually evaluate the data which has been found from this research phase. This will identify the tools needed, to collect the necessary data or information for a specific researching subject (writeawriting, 2015). There are various types of methodologies which can be used in the research field. The majority are associated with the collection of primary and secondary data. In this case we are talking about primary data, since the researcher conducted interviews with the MFA “SportsPlus Limited” and the Malta Tourism Authority, and has collected data from the original source. The secondary data was used in the beginning of this study were the researcher found literature findings related to this subject. Ultimately, a qualitative research approach was used in order to find the necessary data.

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is a researching approach which concentrates on gaining data through open-ended questions and conversational communication between the researcher and the respondent. This approach does not only find “what” the respondents think about the subject, but it also finds out “why” they think in that manner. Therefore, this type of approach helps to identify the behaviour and perception of the respondents through the experience they gained in their work in this area. (QuestionPro, 2021).



## **Interview**

What is an interview? An interview is a qualitative form of research technique, which mainly includes conducting a comprehensive one to one interview, with a limited number of participants. The purpose of an interview is to, identify and explore their ideas, opinions or perspectives on a specific subject, situation or program (BRM, 2011). In this case the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are when the interviewer organizes a list of questions but, won't necessarily ask them all, or ask them in a specific order. Alternately, these prepared questions are used as a guide for the interviewer to use during the interview. (Doyle, 2020).

## **Why this Methodology?**

The purpose of this study was to find the impact that these football training camp events leave on the Maltese Islands. Statistics on this statement can already be found on various sources of the Malta Football Association and the Malta Tourism Authority, so there is no need to look for statistics in this study. Therefore, the researcher mainly focused on the participant's intentions, ideas, interpretations, opinions and also how they see this subject from their perspective. In addition, the researcher's intentions were to find the aspects mentioned beforehand, from the two main bodies when it comes to the organization of these football training camp events which are, the MFA "SportsPlus Limited" and the Malta Tourism Authority. So, a qualitative approach went perfectly with the researcher's intentions because statistics were not needed in this study, but the real result that needed to be found out is "how" and "why" do these football training camp events affect Malta's profile in that way. In other words, how for instance from these training camp events, 30,000 bed nights are generated, how Malta's status is raised as a tourist destination because of these training camps and so on.

So, after the necessary considerations were taken into account, the researcher decided that an Interview was the best tool, in other words a qualitative researching tool. This was an easy way to find the necessary results since the researcher may formulate a list of questions to ask to the participants. This was why the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews since there was a list of open-ended questions the researcher needed to ask and the researcher made the interview seem like a

natural conversation but, at the same time still followed the questions as a guide in order to achieve the necessary responses from the participant.

### **6.3 How was the Research Conducted?**

Firstly, the interview was conducted with Mr. Lionel Gerada who is the director of the Malta Tourism Authority and with Mr. Helmut Amhof, who is a member of the MFA “SportsPlus Limited”. The researcher chose these two participants because both members play a big part in their respective organizations. As explained beforehand the researcher wanted to elicit the opinion of how these training camps impact Malta, from both perspectives since they have a wide experience in this field. This ensured that the researcher received accurate results from these two participants. Secondly, a set of open-ended questions were prepared to ask the participants. The questions were relatively the same, with a slight difference since both participants work in different fields. The questions were mainly based on literature findings and future plans that these two bodies have on football training camp events.

Furthermore, these interviews were conducted through online programs due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The interview with Mr. Lionel Gerada was conducted on a program called ‘Microsoft Teams’ and the one with Mr. Helmut Amhof was conducted on another program called ‘Zoom’. Finally, during both interviews, notes were taken about what was said so ultimately the researcher came to a conclusion about the topic.

### **6.4 Limitations**

The Literature review, as a source of secondary research, has been a crucial aspect when it comes to this study since the main part of the interviews were based on it. Therefore, a strong literature finding was needed in order to proceed with the research study.

The limitations which the researcher encountered were mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher could not do the interview face to face which was relatively preferred by the researcher. In a face-to-face interview the interaction is much better than being online so maybe, some information from the participant’s side was left out or omitted. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic there were few tourists coming to Malta to watch these football training camps and it was very difficult to find a football enthusiast from another country to conduct an interview. If it were



possible the researcher could have had substantial information from statements and opinions coming from three or more perspectives. In addition, the researcher could have also distributed surveys to football enthusiasts asking about their opinions on football training camp events in Malta, which could have added to the results the researcher had.

## **7. Results and Analysis**

### **7.1 Interview 1**

#### **Background**

The first Interview was conducted with Mr. Lionel Gerada, who is the director of the Malta Tourism Authority in Events, Digital Media, Marketing and Communications.

#### **Why Malta?**

Mr Gerada, started by explaining why other countries should choose Malta to host these training camps. Firstly, because of the sunny weather that Malta has, due to the fact that rarely there are days where the climate does not permit that these training camps be hosted. Secondly, the language barrier that Malta has since, the majority of the population in Malta can speak two to three languages. The English language is one of the main languages used in Europe including Malta and some of the population can also speak Italian, French and German. In view of the fact that most of the population are taught the English language from a very young age and other languages throughout their studies. Thirdly, Mr Gerada pointed out that the Maltese public, is very welcoming when it comes to international bodies coming to the country. Finally, Mr Gerada pointed out Malta's connectivity levels since the islands are easily accessible due to reasonable prices and connectivity routes. Therefore, automatically due to these three factors which are price, climate and connectivity levels, it gives us an advantage over other countries.

#### **Attraction**

According to Mr Gerada, in order to have the maximum amount of turnover in relation to training camps, we need to attract more international teams around the world to come to these training camps. Companies like the Malta Tourism Authority and the MFA "SportsPlus Limited" need to emphasise on marketing and eventually use innovative strategies and ideas where it comes to promotion and marketing; for instance, digital media, in order to attract these ventures, which in this case are the international teams. From the perspective of the tourists who mainly come to Malta for the purpose of these training camps, in order to enhance their experience in Malta, Mr Gerada explained that a "360 approach" needs to be created. This means, when a

tourist is a football enthusiast, people, who organise these events like the MTA, can widen the offer that these tourists have in relation to football activities. For instance, apart from the training camp event, they can go see another game which is hosted in Malta or other engaging football activities. In addition, one must provide adequate facilities which accommodate these tourists who follow this type of sport and eventually aim to make it easier for the tourist so that his/her experience is better than it was expected from his/her perspective.

## **Enhancement of the Touristic Experience**

Mr Gerada sees these training camps as being a great additional offer to the tourism industry in Malta. It is crucial that a country has diversification when it comes to attracting tourists to their country. In other words, this means having different target markets or segments in order to attract the maximum number of tourists to the country. The Covid-19 pandemic has surely taught us this since there was a big drop of tourists coming to the Maltese islands. They needed to find different ways of attracting tourists. In fact, training camps in Malta were still being held like the “Juventus” training camps held in September 2020.

## **Previous Training Camp Events and their Impacts?**

The MTA, as explained by Mr Gerada, look at the “Spin-offs”, that is, when a product is marketed by particular associations. The associations in Malta are the MFA, MTA and the MFA “SportsPlus Limited”, with a popular program personality, movie and so on, which in this case is a famous international team or personality. These personalities come to Malta specifically for these training camps. Mr Gerada brought up the examples which were, when “Javier Zanetti” participated in a 6-day Training camp held in Malta, between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 (MaltaToday. 2015). Prior this event, they assessed the additional marketing and additional spin-offs Malta was going to receive. Being that “Javier Zanetti” is a famous “Inter Milan” player, it was the perfect personality to host the training camp with. Another example which also attracted the Maltese youngsters was when the “Juventus” training camp was held between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (JAcademy, 2020). This gave children aged between 6 and 16 the opportunity to be coached by professional Juventus coaches from all over the world. Finally, he also brought up an example of a famous female Maltese player ‘Hayley Bugeja’, who is currently one of the young rising

stars who is thriving in Italy. ‘Hayley Bugeja’ was initially discovered during a training camp held in Malta.

These training camps leave added value to Malta’s profile. This is because when you have big international teams who come to Malta and feel comfortable and satisfied with the facilities offered, they will leave the impact that our country is an up to standard country. It is like, if there is an association between that particular international club and your country, you have ultimately reached a benchmark. The MTA continued to invest in these associations with numerous clubs. One of them was “Manchester United”, which was in collaboration with them, with Malta ending up being the official destination partner with this well-known club. Therefore, automatically Malta continued to elevate its profile.

### **MTA, MFA and MFA “SportsPLus Limited”**

According to Mr Gerada it is very important that the MTA and the MFA “SportsPlus Limited” work together in order to successfully organise these training camp events. There needs to be good communication between these two associations, so when Malta is hosting a training camp, this event will not clash with another event in the same sector, due to Malta being a small island. Finally, Mr Gerada pointed out that normally the MTA looks at what they can gain from a marketing point of view towards Malta in order to use these football training camp events as a tourist attraction method.

## 7.2 Interview 2

### Background

The second interview was conducted with Mr Helmut Amhof who is a member of the MFA “SportsPlus Limited”. Mr Amhof has been in this business for 15 years where he worked with approximately 1500 teams in summer and winter, from the German national team to Liverpool, Chelsea and Manchester United. These are considered as top teams. Mr Amhof comes from one of the biggest sport management companies in the world which is “Essel Fc”. This company is based in Austria and it hosts around 180 training camps a year. He was working with them in the past but around 6 years ago Mr Amhof and his team did a market research about Malta. This research included whether it could be a destination for training camps. They checked the infrastructure, the available pitches, hotels, airport, transport and what Malta has to offer all round. Eventually, they found out that Malta is an interesting location to offer these football training camp events. After this step they founded the company here in Malta 3 years ago, which as previously mentioned is called the MFA “SportsPlus Limited”. Malta Football Association owns 50% of the ownership and “Essel Fc” owns the other 50%.

### Why Malta?

The majority of football clubs usually have their break in winter or in summer. As explained by Mr Amhof, Malta is not a destination for summer since it is very hot during that season. This is due to the infrastructure, such as the grass of the football pitches, which is not good enough for professional teams. On the other hand, Malta is a destination for winter training camps since winter break usually starts from January, mid- February and sometimes in the beginning of March. During this period the climate here in Malta is perfect to host these events. This company has a number of connections with various flights from different destinations and slowly they build the travelling aspect of these events and this will result in short distance. In other words, this means short distance from European countries to Malta. Since it is located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea Malta is easily accessible. Moreover, the time to travel from one place to another on the island is minimal. This is why, “in the last years, during this period, approximately 15 to 20 professional football teams came to Malta

during the winter break and they enjoyed themselves and the company gained more and more references from other international teams. In addition, from the side of the football federations, the government, MTA etc., there is now more interest in building up the infrastructure because Malta could double up the amount of training camps. Mainly the international teams only care about the infrastructure and pitches with natural grass and not artificial” (Helmut Amhof).

## **Enhancing the Experience**

When it comes to enhancing the experience and the number of turnovers for both international teams and tourists, it mainly depends on the attractivity levels of visitors. This depends on the culture of the clubs which are visiting the country. In fact, they had various experiences with clubs like “Schalke Fc”, which is a popular team in the “Bundesliga league” in Germany, with whom they had negotiations 2 years ago. When they go to training camps, they normally attract a huge crowd with around 400 to 600 fans. Mr Amhof believes that Malta is in strong progress to continuously bring teams where automatically they will attract visitors to these matches. According to Mr Amhof, “the base of sports tourism is infrastructure”, in which Malta is in a disadvantage compared to other countries. Malta does not have enough infrastructure and the existing has been brought up to a good standard over the past 4-5 years but it is still not good enough. The attractivity levels can only grow and build up only when you have more infrastructure. In fact, from the company he comes from it is not a problem. They have over 100 teams as clients since they have a lot of infrastructure.

The MFA “SportsPlus Limited” is continuously in contact with their company partners, MTA, Government Secretary of Sports, Ministry of Tourism and MFA on improving the football venues and facilities in Malta, especially now due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. An interesting fact that Mr Amhof pointed out was that during this particular period Malta was the only country in the world to host training camps. There were two tournaments which were the “Tim Sport” tournament and a women’s tournament. This tournament gave Malta a huge reference and through this reference there are negotiations going on at the moment to host training camps with top teams in Malta.

## **Previous Training Camps and their Impacts**

Mr Amhof was satisfied with previous training camps hosted in Malta, like the “Tim Sport” tournament. In his opinion Malta does not have a lot of media coverage, in any other event in comparison to these training camp events. With the “Tim Sport” tournament they had more than 1300 reports with all matches live on tv in the participating team’s countries, also live in the world-wide network on tv transmissions. There were only 2 to 3 reports about Malta outside this tournament on “Prime Time” on the top tv stations in Czech Republic, Austria and Slovakia. This means with minimum investments on these training camps you can achieve huge benefits. In fact, you see figures of a professional football team coming for a training camp event for a minimum of 6 to 10 days and they are coming with a quantity of 50 to 70 people. In addition, they arrive with media people, who will issue reports every day and these reports won’t only talk about how the teams played or which player was the best. No, they will report about Malta and will enhance the image of our country as a tourist destination especially in this field. Therefore, advertisements and reports outside Malta is 5 to 6 times better, than through the marketing reports or the media reports in the area of Malta.

In relation to Malta’s profile, Mr Amhof said that Malta as a country is oriented around tourism. Sports tourism is currently being given a lot of attention and it must be, since it is one of the most beneficial sectors in the tourism industry. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic when everything was closed, football in general still kept on going. Therefore, football as sports tourism and the tourism industry has a high standing. In combination to these training camp events, if for instance, team A is not coming there is team B and there are thousands of teams interested in participating in training camps so, it is almost always possible to host these training camps.

## **MTA, MFA and MFA “SportsPLus Limited”**

It is important for Mr Amhof that the MFA, MFA “SportsPlus Limited” and the MTA work together because the MFA has the product. In other words, they have the infrastructure which is the football pitches. His company mainly looks for football pitches with natural grass which can be used for training or games. MTA is interested in getting publicity and all of the marketing from these training camps and support them. The MFA “SportsPlus Limited” do the business and negotiations with the other

teams and from their world-wide knowledge about this field they want to make Malta more and more popular as a destination in relation to hosting these events. The company's main aim is not necessarily to concentrate on the quantity, they want to make Malta a quality destination in this field of sports tourism.

## **Future Plans**

According to Mr Amhof there will be two to three top teams coming in the summer. It is still not officially announced but they are working on this project. They are still working on organising another "Tim Sport" tournament, international tournaments and women's tournaments in the winter times. They will reach the level of about 15 to 16 teams; they cannot increase this due to the lack of infrastructure and pitches. They must check when the pitches are being used or also when there are bad weather conditions. This creates damage to the pitches which won't make it comfortable or feasible enough for international teams to play. These pitches would need some time to recover through maintenance. Moreover currently, he is working with a local team known as "Hamrun Spartans", but not to host a training camp in Malta but to go abroad since they have an international network.



## **8. Discussion**

In these results, two perspectives were identified about the impact that these football training camps leave on the Maltese Islands. As expected, both bodies' responses were more detailed towards the line of their field of work. This is since, whilst, Mr Gerada went more into detail about the tourists' experience, the impact that these events leave on the tourism industry in general and the marketing aspects of the football training camp events, Mr Amhof focused more on the organization of these training camps, the negotiations, the equipment and facilities needed and the impact that these events leave towards sports tourism in Malta.

The majority of the people think that tourism in Malta is only during the summer but in reality, tourism during the winter can also be an asset for Malta during these football training camp events. Surely this question has been answered which is, 'What improvements need to be executed?'. Ultimately, these interviews have clearly shed the light that Malta needs to improve its infrastructure. Mainly the construction of more natural football pitches, in order to host more training camp events in the same time span. One suggestion could be to change the current artificial grass pitches to natural pitches so as to make the most out of the pitches in Malta.

Malta has already built-up credibility over the past 5 years, but both bodies said there is the potential for more. Furthermore, these events are not only discovered through marketing which is conducted in Malta, but as was found out through the interviews, marketing can also be done through international TV shows, the reports which are published all over the world about the successful training camp events which are hosted in Malta. The marketing in Malta is very helpful when it comes to the organization of these events. This is since football is such a popular sport, easily attractable by the public, especially when a particular international team has a huge name and crowd behind it. However, continuous studies need to be done because marketing is a subject which is evolving and the MTA needs to find new innovative ways to promote Malta in this field.

Nonetheless, all of these successful events, are achieved through the team work of these three major companies. This is because each company has its own particular role when it comes to the organization and impacts that these events leave on them. There are different impacts on each company. The MTA is impacted by a

successful training camp as it will eventually have more material to improve its marketing and packages it offers to tourists. The MFA and the MFA “Sports Plus Limited” will benefit from successful training camps because other countries will be identifying Malta as a professional country in this field through international reports and TV shows, and will eventually attract more international teams to Malta.

## **9. Conclusion**

Training camps have become a huge element of sports tourism in Malta. Throughout this research, we have seen how far Malta has come in this field. Malta in the past was only a sun and sea destination, but throughout the years it has widened its segments. One of these segments is sports tourism. This is a great “additional offer” (Mr Gerada), as it has been bringing a new crowd to the Maltese islands. Despite, not being in their field, travel agencies for instance, can offer sports packages to tourists who come to Malta. In addition, restaurants and hotels can offer discounts or packages when a training camp is going to be held for tourists, so this will motivate them to visit their establishments especially football enthusiasts.

Ultimately, additional studies need to be done about these training camps in order to improve the quality of these camps. This is because as Mr Helmut Amhof said his company is looking firstly, to make Malta a quality destination before making it both a quality and a quantity training camp destination. Therefore, the studies which mainly need to be done in order to improve the quality are the infrastructure and the quality of pitches that Malta has. The MFA can also find ways to improve the technological facilities in this field in order to keep up with other countries. Like for instance, they can start to make investments in order to install a “VAR System “and a “Goal Line Technology System “in the National Stadium in Malta. These are the latest technologies in football. Even though Malta excels in the marketing of these events, studies still need to be conducted since marketing is a vast subject and it is continuously changing.

Overall, these football training camps have been leaving a mark on the Maltese Profile both on an economical and influential level. Additionally, these events can still be of an asset to the tourism industry even through extreme situations like the Covid-19 pandemic. Over time, these sporting events are becoming considered as major events all round in the hospitality and tourism industry.

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## 11. **Appendix**

### Interviews:

#### Interview 1

Mr Lionel Gerada

1. Tell me about the role you have at the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA).
2. Why should international teams choose Malta to host these training camp events? What makes us unique and special which gives international teams an incentive to choose Malta over other countries?
3. How do you think we can attract more international teams to host football training camp events in Malta? What strategies can be used?
4. How can we enhance the experience for visitors/tourists who come to watch these international teams play and also for those international teams who participate in these training camp events?
5. What do you think about Malta's football venues and sporting facilities? Are they up to standard with the teams' demands?
6. What are your views on previous training camps held in Malta?
7. How do you think these football training camp events make an impact on the tourism Industry?
8. What impact in your opinion do these football training camp events leave on Malta's Profile?
9. How and why is it important that the MFA (Malta Football Association) "SportsPlus Limited" and the MTA (Malta Tourism Authority) work together in the organization of these football training camp events?

## Long Essay Consent Form



Title of Research: The impact of Football Events in Malta.

Researcher: Liam Falzon – 0384302L

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Liam Falzon, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my Higher National Diploma. I am carrying out research on "The impact of Football Events in Malta."

I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be



attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

### Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above-mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.



Participant's Name



Participant's Signature



Date

Liam Falzon

Researcher's Name



Researcher's Signature

01/04/2021

Date

## **Interview 2**

Mr Helmut Amhof

1. Tell me about the role you have in relation to football training camp events (MFA “SportsPlus Limited”).
2. Why should international teams choose Malta to host these training camp events? What makes us unique and special which gives international teams an incentive to choose Malta over other countries?
3. How do you think we can attract more international teams to host football training camp events in Malta? What strategies can be used?
4. How can we enhance the experience for visitors/tourists who come to watch these international teams play and also for those international teams who participate in these training camp events?
5. What do you think about Malta’s football venues and sporting facilities? Are they up to standard with the teams’ demands?
6. Are there any plans on improving the Football Venues and Sporting Facilities in Malta like the “Millennium Stand”? And if yes, can you give us any indications?
7. What experience do you have in hosting football training camp events? In addition, what are your views on previous training camps held in Malta?
8. What impact in your opinion do these football training camp events leave on Malta’s Profile?
9. How and why is it important that the MFA (Malta Football Association) “SportsPlus Limited” and the MTA (Malta Tourism Authority) work together in the organization of these football training camp events?
10. Are you planning on organizing football training camp events in the near future despite the Covid-19 pandemic?

## Long Essay Consent Form



Title of Research: The impact of Football Events in Malta.

Researcher: Liam Falzon – 0384302L

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Liam Falzon, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my Higher National Diploma. I am carrying out research on "The impact of Football Events in Malta."

I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

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attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

### Participant's declaration

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Helmut Amhof      Helmut Amhof      27/07/2021  
Participant's Name      Participant's Signature      Date

Liam Falzon      Liam Falzon      27/07/2021  
Researcher's Name      Researcher's Signature      Date